

The Heir Apparent

BY MRS. EVERARD COTES

• (Sara Jeannette Duncan)

"I LIKE the shape of his head," Miss Garratt said. We were talking of Randal Cope, and there was more than approval in Miss Garratt's words; there was barely suppressed enthusiasm. We three—Miss Garratt, her niece Ida Chamier, and I—were sitting on the veranda of a private hotel in Toronto. Randal Cope was just visible in the smoking-room; his head, indeed, with a pipe attached, was the salient feature of the window. It was a night of warm June; the maple-trees hung heavily in their clustering sprays around the house. The air held an expanded sense that the day had been got through with, and we sat sharing it with all the city, watching the electric cars flash up and down.

"I like the shape of his head," said Miss Garratt.

"It is a head," I responded, "plainly made to carry a great deal."

Ida looked languidly round at the silhouette in the window. "If it carries its own traditions—" she began.

"It will have enough to do?" I suggested. "Oh, well, we expect more than that."

"Yes indeed," explained Ida's aunt, with that agreeable Southern enunciation that runs the two words into one emphasis. "We expect, don't we, an immense amount?"

It was partly, no doubt, due to the enervating atmosphere that Miss Garratt stopped short of the catalogue of what we did expect; but none of us, of course, would have been able to make it with confidence and facility. The immense amount that we expected was naturally almost as vague as it was vivid; there were so many possibilities, all of them dramatic in the sense of leaping achievement, and never so much as a sign, as yet, to tell us which way to look. Without other indication the gaze upon

Randal Cope enthusiastically travelled back to the chivalric statesman who was his grandfather, and to Mrs. Robert Cope, who was his mother. Either of them by himself or herself would have been an antecedent to build upon, but both! Charles Randal, whose personality had stood even with his power in every capital of Europe, whose moral standards still shone plain above politics: classicist, dialectician, all but artist—and to this great shade his daughter, who was simply in the world of the ideal and its numbered symbols alone a force and a current—here was a Valhalla for a nursery! It contained, so unusually, both the general and the particular. There was not an eye in the great republic so neighboring to us on Miss Lucas's veranda that would not light with a kind of proprietorship in his doctrines at the name of Charles Randal; his was one of those rare circles that widen across the Atlantic and strike effectively upon its still half-hostile farther shore. And to those smaller, more peculiar groups who propose to themselves initiation, what priestess ever stood, with one finger on the curtain and another on her lip, more honored in her function than Margaret Cope? Verily we left our shoes outside. Poet and essayist she was, moulding life with her hands; delicate truth she sounded upon a chord lifted and mystic. Critic and scholar, she measured the world from a height; but in her verse she walked among us and saw all our sad horizons, and beyond.

So that this young man had merely to write his name to make a double appeal, to the heart and to the imagination. He seemed to be aware of this, for he wrote the whole of it and suffered himself to be introduced by the whole of it—"Mr. Randal Cope." On the other hand, he wrote it badly, with cramped careful-

ness, and he was awkward in acknowledging the eager salutations which the world had for him. We of the boundless expectations had such things to go upon—that he came into a room magnificently and went out of it almost sideways; that he had an immense distinction of appearance, which he wore like a tiresome necessary diadem; that he had taken, at Oxford, a degree even more brilliant than his grandfather's—a reflection which gave us an instant's thrill of sympathy with Oxford upon the high ground of prophecy. These were simple threads, but we found at Miss Lucas's that they could be woven into patterns of quite extraordinary complexity. It is satisfying to think that if he had known we were weaving them he could not have retired himself more completely from the field of observation. We saw him before us every day, and to the fact that his splendid head was the ornament of a commanding person we could add that he was rather slovenly in his dress, with an opulent taste in neckties. There was also the general understanding that he was "out here" on an imperialistic mission for one of the leading English magazines. That was all we knew, all we seemed likely to know, and it was so little that one could understand its constituting, for Miss Garratt, a grievance.

We felt the weight of trifles when, a moment or two later, Mr. Cope joined us on the veranda. His hesitation in the French window from the drawing-room was so palpable, his decision in our favor so obvious, that we could not help apprehending that he did nothing lightly. He sat down beside us—not quite beside us, but near enough to form a communicable part of our group—I speak for Miss Garratt and myself; Ida barely lifted her eyelids. Miss Garratt and I were conscious of excitement; I am afraid in our attitudes of alert encouragement we betrayed it; Miss Garratt even twisted her chair a little to bring Mr. Cope's within an arc of welcome. And it was Miss Garratt naturally who addressed him.

"Well, Mr. Cope," said she, "and what do you think of this *al fresco* life?"

The young man looked at her with distant deference. "This—?"

"Oh, this emancipation all about you,

this sitting on verandas in the public of the moon, these airs of the forest in the city streets. But no; I shouldn't ask. These impressions are precisely—aren't they?—what you've come so far to dig out of yourself. They are, of course, valuable, and you keep them, or you ought to keep them, locked up. But you can at least tell us if you don't think it very hot."

It seems absurd to say that Miss Garratt's speech had the force of an assault upon a citadel. Its object seemed literally to gather himself into himself; he visibly receded, shrank into some fastness, from which he still looked out, startled, troubled, and insecure.

"I do indeed find it hot. But—but very delightful also—Miss Garratt."

There was a peculiar charm in his hesitation before uttering her name, and the way his voice dropped in saying it. Certainly deference was his personal note, his note of intercourse. One's imagination flew to his mother and his grandfather—my imagination and Miss Garratt's. And Ida looked up.

"One mustn't press, I know," Miss Garratt went on. "All the same, it would be fascinating to compare notes—what you see with what we see. We too have brought virgin imaginations to this part of the empire; we haven't been here before, either. And we come from Mississippi."

Mr. Cope looked at her seriously and hesitated, seeming to revolve many replies. One saw a young man in a rather rigid attitude of attention, with eyes in which expression struggled to be born, pulling—as if that would help—at his mustache. One noticed a hand of extraordinary shapeliness—the modern, beautifully nervous kind; a hand, one thought, to grasp its inheritance.

"I suppose," he said, finally, "it is even warmer in Mississippi—just now."

"It is quite impossibly warm there," Miss Garratt replied, and I saw her make, and arrest, a movement toward the lorgnette that hung in the folds of her dress. Ida, where she sat, on the edge of the veranda, made half a movement of her head toward her aunt, in which Miss Garratt might have detected something like protest.

"Have you been penetrated by our

national anthem, Mr. Cope?" I inquired.

"The maple leaf, our emblem dear,
The maple leaf forever."

In two or three hundred years it will gather sentiment enough to turn it into music. Meanwhile these are all maples, round the house, all that aren't chestnuts."

Mr. Cope started slightly in my direction, as if toward a new emergency. "I have not seen it, I am afraid," he said. His gravity really rendered him culpable. "I must look it up at once."

"I know two more lines," Ida suddenly declared, "if you would like to hear them."

"May I?"

She swung round on the palm of one hand and lifted the clear oval of her face in the shadows.

"God save the King, and Heaven bless
The maple leaf forever!"

she sang, with enthusiasm and submission. It was a simple, gay, impersonal note she sounded, with a touch of extravagance, half mocking, in which her young Americanism must needs declare itself; and it took absolutely no account, except the most adventitious, of Mr. Randall Cope as her listener. It was then that I saw, for the first time, his wonderful flash and smile. It was one thing, the sudden happy torch that lightened and deepened in his eyes and the way his upper lip lifted and turned down at the corners,—a demonstration so vivid, a sign so plain, that one threw with a delightful impulse a votive flower to Margaret Cope in the moonlight.

"The maple seems — doesn't it? — to have more leaves than rhymes," he said to Ida, drawing himself back as it were for the effort, which came from him at once audacious and shy, with the oddest effect of old-fashioned prankishness in the way he went on smiling at her from under his eyebrows, very courteous and conceding. It must have been thus, we thought, that he had seen his grandfather address ladies when he was very young.

I suppose Ida Chamier found something to say, but there is no doubt that she looked back at him, felt the release in him, took the smile from his eyes. This one saw in a swift instant pass

straight into the soul of her, whence she gave as quickly something back to him that also sped on a smile. It happened then, just then—the story; and a moment's silence followed it, while the moon moved thoughtfully to a better point of view. Presently Ida sprang up and put on her hat. She was going to post a letter, she said, and she would like to go herself,—thanks. When Randall Cope stepped, rather awkwardly, along the wooden walk by her side, Miss Garratt and I exchanged glances which confessed, startled and contrite, our hateful presence where the moon should have been the only one. Then we saw that he went but to open the gate, and felt relief. He closed the gate, indeed, with quite a contrasting deliberateness, and came slowly back to the house, reaching his rooms by another door.

I looked with more interest than ever at Ida's photograph that night. Her aunt had given it to me; when Miss Garratt became fond of anybody she gave her Ida's photograph. It was a fortunate portrait; it yielded Miss Chamier's personality as well as her beauty; it suggested her fastidiousness as well as her grace, and was as true to her easy distinction as it could not help being to her charming clothes. No doubt, as Miss Garratt said, she was immensely clever—I glanced again at the sonnet the elder lady had lent me—no doubt she shared her aunt's passionate interest in human forms of genius. If one did not see the critical worshipping eye, it was, Miss Garratt declared, because in the arrogance of youth she hid her fire, which nevertheless burned fiercely, and nowhere with more ardent dedication, I had been assured, than upon the altar of Margaret Cope.

"You *must* find it," Miss Garratt charged me a week later. "You must. It's too maddening."

What Miss Garratt so peremptorily demanded that I should find ought by now, we both vaguely felt, to be a matter of daily quiet evidence,—the vision and the power, to put it concisely, that with such brilliant confidence we had predicated of him. And it was not; oh, assuredly it was not. How clever we were, how stimulating, how adventurous! How we danced before him with lutes into the realm of the imagination, always, alas!

to look back and see him seated upon the verge, with a pipe! Everything worth reading he had read, everybody worth meeting he had met—the latter invariably at his mother's, at lunch,—but his consciousness seemed a deep receptive pool into which these things simply disappeared, leaving an untroubled surface. Now and then at the lifting of an eyelid one caught a reflection; it was always true and just, and sometimes it was charming. It gave one vividly the idea that this life upon which he had been able to draw so largely had contributed very really to a fund, somewhere stored up in him, of right thinking and exquisite taste. But the depths were black and the indication most inadequate. We could both point to half a dozen men who abounded in the testimony we sought without producing a tenth of the belief we had already.

"With her," said Miss Garratt, "it would be so entirely a matter of that."

We were convinced that it would. "That" was especially and peremptorily what Ida Chamier would require, and require not in hypothesis, but in demonstration. Nothing else in a mate would claim her, Miss Garratt declared; she knew Ida; and she cited Teddy Farnham with his millions, and Arthur Rennick with his political future, as if their rejected addresses might illustrate her point, but were by no means necessary to prove it. Miss Garratt's own idea was very clear. Ida had a spark of genius. I had long since learned its family history. Another spark might bring it to a flame. There was something sacred about such a trust, primarily reposed in Ida and secondarily in her aunt, and though hitherto Miss Garratt had been content to interpret her share of it in the duty of vestal virgin fanning at the altar, the advent of Randal Cope had widened both her solicitude and her responsibility.

"Did I tell you he had written her some verses?" Gussie went on, with dejection.

"No!" I said. "How did you know?"

"Oh, she showed them to me. She well might—they were *in Latin*!"

"Good heavens!"

"She said they were very good, very witty. She knows, you know. But

when she translated them I couldn't see the wit."

"One never can, in translations," I soothed her. "It's a matter of the use of the gerund, or the conjunction *ut*. They probably were good."

"Oh, I dare say—I mean, of course they were. How could he produce anything that wasn't? He simply radiates quality," she went on, looking at me anxiously; "and for fibre, hear him speak—look at his hands."

"You're not trying to convince *me*!" I protested. "But here she comes. Shall I be bold?"

Miss Garratt sent me a frightened glance, which I ignored.

"We were talking about Randal Cope," I said, as Ida joined us.

The faintest look of displeasure showed, for an instant, between her eyebrows. Then she laughed.

"No!" she exclaimed, railing at us, as if we were always doing it.

"We simply cannot make up our minds," I continued.

"Make up your minds?" It was an excellent effect of wondering indifference, and Miss Chamier sat down to the piano.

"Whether one is safe, after all, in predicating great things of him."

She struck two or three chords, into which, I fancied, thought passed. "Why predicate anything?" she said. "Why not wait?"

"That's so difficult," I sighed, "when one is dying to foretell and be gloriously vindicated. We complain, your aunt Gussie and I, that he gives us nothing to go upon but our instincts."

"I am out of temper with him," said Miss Garratt, taking up a book.

Ida glanced from one to the other of us. "I don't see that it matters," she said. "I don't see what right you have—any of us have—to expect him to please *us*."

"That view," I said, with infinite guile, "simply shows you non-speculative, dear. Or perhaps not so deeply interested as your aunt and I are in his mother. We want to see Mrs. Cope fulfilled in her son, and he seems somehow to present a baffling front to his destiny. It's absurd, as you justly remark, to be irritated, but we both are."

"Oh, his mother!" exclaimed Miss

Chamier, and fell to the brilliant execution of the "Appassionata." She paused abruptly to say, "He seems to take a good deal for granted about his mother."

"Not too much, surely."

"Well, he is always telling one what she thinks or what she does."

"How delightful of him! I wish he would tell *me*."

"Doesn't he?"

"Never a word. He tells me little stories, usually about bishops."

"He suggests having always lived among them," put in Miss Garratt, with an air of mournful detachment. "Bishops and high-thinking men. But he is the enviable inheritor of all the great traditions, isn't he? In letters and morals and politics."

"And there's something in him," I contributed, "so hoarded, so precious, so absolutely the last expression, that its inaccessibility—"

I stopped. Ida had left the piano, and waited, looking at me oddly, with her hand upon the door. She broke almost passionately upon my hesitation.

"I can't think," she said, "why you and Aunt Gussie talk about him so much! I can't think!" Then she went quickly out.

"And now," demanded Miss Garratt, in low tones of panic—"and now what have you done?"

Well, we could wait. After all, it came to that, and her aunt and I made all, I venture, that could be made out of the fact that this obvious course was Ida's own suggestion. Meanwhile a leading magazine published another of her Italian sketches, which she immediately locked up in a drawer. I did not hear of it till long afterwards.

Mr. Cope's commission was from the *Period*. His reticence could only be described as protective, but so much he had divulged, not being able to help it, since Miss Garratt asked him point-blank. The *Period*, we agreed, was precisely the medium through which a Randal Cope could show his essential quality to the world. You found, as your great-grandfather had found, the best thought in England in the *Period*; and one could imagine its welcome to young Randal. They had given him generous imperial range; I understood

he was only beginning with Canada; and he seemed to me to be almost hampered with facilities. The name of the Lieutenant-Governor of the province came up between us.

"I know Sir George," he said. "He was kind enough to ask me to stay there."

"And you didn't?" I queried.

"Well, no. I think a fellow had better keep out of Government Houses. He's a bit too much in the middle of it there, I find."

"How are you getting on?" I asked, looking out of the window. "I believe it will rain, after all."

"Oh—thank you—there's immense material, isn't there? I—I've sent them something."

Presently he turned and looked at me with directness, a simple and sudden regard. The rain struck softly on the trees and murmured over the grass. The quiet breath of it came into the room.

"You know I ought to do something," he said, and in his eyes, with almost a pang, I saw the problem that had been perplexing us all.

"But you will. You can hardly"—I hesitated—"help it."

"That's just it." He paused appreciably, and then added, "It seems to me that I've got—more or less—to trust to that. I hope one may. One has dreams."

He gave me a look full of courage and patience and nice feeling, but he had come to the end of his confidence.

"I'll walk out to the Hunt Club, I think," he said; "it's such a jolly day."

He brought it to me himself, the August *Period*, on the veranda, while there was still light enough to read. I remember thinking, as one notes trifles at great moments, that the *Period* had never approved of undignified anticipation; when the time came you got your *Period*, and not in the third week of the previous month. Almost at the same moment the gate clicked, and Ida came quickly up the path. She went to her room without a glance at us, and she carried a bookseller's parcel.

My eye fled down the list of contents on the cover. There it was, the fourth article: "Canada and the Empire.—I. By Randal Cope."

My eye fled over the first sentence, lost itself in the middle of the next para-

graph, and dashed back to take the task seriously, with powers collected. The queer premonitory shiver that sprang upon me I paused to denounce as foolish, premature; but the very rebuke revealed its apprehension. I tried to soothe a jumping pulse with the assurance that this was a matter with which, after all, my concern was remote; what was it, indeed, to me though Randal Cope spoke with the tongue of men and of angels and had not imagination? Then I set out to read the opening paragraph, deliberately, and quite in vain. It was concerned, I perceived, with facts of the first importance in the balance of political science, but their category escapes me now as then; the character of the thing, its quality, its significance beyond its meaning, leaped out from it and obscured the words. Presently I gave up the effort and looked at it, just looked, and at the next paragraph, and the next.

Then, hastily, I regarded the article by pages, from top to bottom, from beginning to end; it bulked very respectably among the contents of the *Period*. The eye could take it in that way, I realized in my dismay; its lines and proportions stood square and plain; it had formal definition; it was instantly realizable, in scope, intention, achievement. And we who thought to ponder it, to wonder and exclaim! To be confounded by directness and set at naught by exactitude was perhaps in the nature of proper chastening, but the structure proffered also the consideration of material, and there was no escape from the dejected conviction that it was all built of bricks.

Closer examination here and there showed the bricks substantial, with plenty of straw, but when one had looked for a marble palace! Irreproachable bricks, set with precision, and what would have been, in any other material, a certain dignity of sequence and design, a great subject in ground-plan, and an eminence like a railway station. And curiously colorless and withdrawn, never the flush of a prejudice, never the flash of a mistake! I dropped the thing in my lap. "*How* they have taught him!" I almost groaned aloud. At that very instant I saw Gussie Garratt from her retreat by the drawing-room window pounce upon the post-

man, who delivered to her the magazine in its unmistakable wrapper. As she scuttled across the end of the veranda with it I waved my copy at her. "Never—never—never!" I cried. She gave me a frightened glance and sped on. Then Randal Cope came back and dropped into a chair. His face was still bright with the pleasure and excitement of it. He had won his spurs, and there they were, for my intelligent consideration. I turned them over. There was plenty to say in honest praise; one had only to forget the signature.

We talked for a while, and presently a vagueness grew upon him.

"Would you be so good as to show the article to—to Miss Chamier?" he said elaborately at last, poor dear boy. "She has kindly expressed a wish to see it;" and I went up-stairs, feigning to consent, well knowing that Miss Chamier, alone in her room, had long since considered the article in its fullest import.

I do not know what induced me to throw the publication across the room; it was quite a disproportionate display of feeling; but I did, and there it was lying, face downwards, when Ida Chamier, with barely a knock, walked in.

"I came," she said, with an odd challenge in her voice, "to show you Mr. Cope's paper in the *Period*." She put it before me and stood looking over my shoulder. "It's quite excellent, I think—wonderfully sound"—and then her eyes caught the dishevelled thing on the floor. "But you've seen it already!" She walked over and picked up the insulted magazine, smoothing out its ruffled leaves, and sending me, on a glance, a full charge of indignation. "What did you do this to it for?" she demanded; and there was nothing else for it, so I said out of my pure wonder,

"I was disappointed with it."

"Of course you were! And Aunt Gussie—no doubt she's 'disappointed' too! You both expected something different, something from his mother or his grandfather. His mother is a poet and an essayist—well and good, very charming. His grandfather was just a great Englishman, and there are lots of them. And he is himself!"

Her eyes were bright with excitement; she was really talking very impulsively.

"Just a big, strong, splendid man, his own stamp and his own pattern—"

"My dear Ida!" I expostulated.

"You had no *earthly* business to be disappointed," she went on, undaunted. "Can't he inherit all that—that you thought of—in his most"—she seemed to seek, in the magnificence of her concession, for words that should hold nothing back—"his most lovable and princely nature? Can't he himself be the sole person to benefit—and perhaps the particularly happy woman whom he marries? Imagine any individuality that is worth its salt condescending to take the mould that is prescribed for it! But of course there was always the danger—and I *was* so afraid he might be some sort of repetition. I don't think anybody could permanently l—like a man who was only that."

"Ida! You don't—you're not going to—"

"But I do—and I just am! He doesn't know what I waited for, but I don't mind telling you it was this. I wanted to be quite sure. And I wish you'd say," she went on, with beguilement, "that you think it's a good article."

"If I were in love with him," I retorted, "I should think it a splendid article;" at which Miss Chamier pressed her lips together with immense self-control and left me.

"You and Aunt Gussie," she put her head back in the door to say, "did put one off so dreadfully!"

The book appeared in due course, and the only thing the copious reviewers never found to say of it was that the world would clearly have no share in Randal Cope's inheritance. They missed this obvious deduction, though other volumes have proved it with increasing clearness since. The younger Copes live in Westminster near the Colonial Office, where Randal has got a "job"—his wife delights, I think maliciously, to dwell upon it under that unlovely term. He is generally acknowledged to be rather good at his job. Miss Garratt, who has a flat in their neighborhood, nurses a grievance that these things should not appear to surprise the people of England. She discovers here a subtle form of ingratitude not confined to republics. And she cannot be bullied into any recantation about the shape of his head.